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MASTER FILE

DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES #DD-9

MEMORANDUM FOR   Michael Longini
Chief, Decennial Systems and Contract Management Office

Attention: Ed Wagner
Decennial Systems and Contract Management Office

From: Howard Hogan
Chief, Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Prepared By: Dave Sheppard
Decennial Statistical Studies Division

Subject: Observation of Coverage Edit Followup in Troy, MI, Peoria, IL, and Cedar Rapids, IA on July 19-21, 2000

I.   Summary

These are three of thirteen call center locations throughout the country conducting coverage edit followup (CEFU) for Census 2000. I observed agents (telephone interviewers) conducting computer assisted telephone interviews. I also observed how Quality Assurance (QA) agents monitor the performance of CEFU agents and provide feedback to the agents.

Overall, I was impressed with the quality of the interviews as well as the agents' appropriate observance of procedures. I noticed several differences between the staffing, working environment and difficulties faced by each of the three call centers. Some of these differences will be outlined within my report.

II.   Three Facilities

On Wednesday, July 19th, I arrived at the Centrobe facility in Troy, MI by late afternoon. I toured the call center before observing calls and calibration sessions.

Thursday, July 20th found me at the APAC Peoria facility for another late afternoon observation which turned out to be their final day of operations for this operation. Unfortunately, due to the minimal call lists, there wasn't much to observe in Peoria.

My third stop was at the Eclipse facility in Cedar Rapids, IA on Friday July 21ˢᵗ where I arrived just after lunchtime. The staff was enthusiastic in showing off the excellent job they were doing for us.

III. Call Center Similarities

Facilities
At each of the facilities I met several of the CEFU supervisors and managers. I saw the area where the agents made their calls as well as the quality assurance (QA) area where agents are monitored. I decided to observe during the afternoon and early evening hours because they were the most successful times for reaching respondents at home.

Agents
In general, I was satisfied with the agents performance. Each agent's computer was logged into the system to handle a specific edit failure and form type. Most agents stayed fairly close to the required verbatim reading of the scripts in the interview instrument. They usually only deviated from the scripting when confronted with a reluctant respondent or a respondent who was obviously confused by the scripting.

Many of the agents at each of these call centers had also worked on the inbound telephone questionnaire assistance program earlier this year. It was apparent that the agents who had been through both campaigns were much more polished and better at responding to the respondents' concerns. Once assigned to CEFU, all agents were dedicated solely to the Census programs.

Quality Assurance
I was able to observe QA agents conduct their work. After an agent completed a call, the QA agent rated the quality of the resolution based on several call attributes and assigned the agent a score for the resolution. Once the score was determined, the QA agent proceeded to the "call floor" and provided immediate feedback on the previous resolution to the agent. The positives of the resolution were emphasized while the QA agent reminded the agent to adhere to the call guidelines. This seemed to be effective.

III. Call Center Differences

Staffing and Workload

- Of the three, only Cedar Rapids had bilingual agents. Because of this, they were sometime able to move a bilingual or Spanish speaking agent to take a call initiated in English but where the respondent spoke only Spanish. This was very helpful and prevented the agent from having to set a callback.

- Cedar Rapids and Troy conducted both long form and short form CEFU interviews, while Peoria only was assigned short form CEFU cases.

- Cedar Rapids hired all of their agents through a temporary employment agency. Most of them were students from nearby colleges looking for a summer job. They had a very capable group of agents.

  Troy also had a very capable group of agents. They used many agents with experience from previous programs and moved them to TQA and CEFU at the start of each operation.

  Agents from Peoria did not seem to be as uniformly capable, although many were acceptable. Some of these agents had difficulty speaking clearly and seemed less capable than the agents I had observed at other sites.

Work environment

- Both the Troy and Cedar Rapids locations were very impressive. The agents were located together in one area of a modern office building. The work areas were bright with large windows. Just about all of the call center staff at these facilities were working on CEFU (and previously just Census TQA).

- The Peoria call center was adequate, but hardly impressive. It was located in a large warehouse without windows. Different sections of the building were conducting different calling campaigns.

Difficulties and Limitations

- Only Peoria was experiencing extended wait time between calls (which I had observed in earlier observations at other centers). This was partially due to the fact that the day I observed was their last day of calling for CEFU and they had very limited calling lists available to them. Troy and Cedar Rapids both had adequate call lists and didn't have problems with extended wait time between calls.

- I observed that Troy and Cedar Rapids had very easy to use monitoring software while Peoria's software was more cumbersome and difficult.

- I observed QA calibration sessions and listened to several agents at both Troy and Cedar Rapids. However, I listened to only a few calls (and no calibration session) in Peoria because their limited calling lists yielded few completed calls during my observation.

Attachment A
Attachment B
Attachment C

cc: DSSD Census 2000 Procedures and Operations Memorandum Series Distribution List
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OUTBOUND ~~INBOUND~~ TQA GENERAL PRODUCTION CHECKLIST OF CENTER ACCOUNTABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

CENTER: Centrobe - Troy, MI

DATE: July 19, 2000

OBSERVER: Dave Sheppard

Center Accountabilities/ Performance Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Comments
Auto Focus Scan Forms are always completed by QA Reps when monitoring agents.	Yes		
Agents and their supervisors are consistently given feedback by QA Reps after monitoring sessions.	Yes		
Calibrations sessions are held by QAR Supervisors for all QA Reps.	Yes		
Agents use OSS to enter data for form requests.			N/A
Agents use OSS to complete survey forms.	Yes		
Agents use OSS to answer caller questions.	Yes		
Bi-lingual agents are proficient in English as well as the 2nd language.			N/A
Agents and other staff that have access to Title 13 data are all sworn in.	Yes		

Center Accountabilities/ Performance Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Comments
Supervisors are observed to be actively assisting agents, conducting at-station call observations, answering questions and handling escalated calls when necessary.	Yes		
EDS monitoring spreadsheet is used for QA monitoring schedules, tracking performance scores, agent classifications and agent status reporting.	Yes		
Center management is knowledgeable about TQA requirements and facilitates observer.	Yes		

OUTBOUND ~~INBOUND~~ TQA GENERAL PRODUCTION CHECKLIST OF CENTER ACCOUNTABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

CENTER: APAC - Peoria, IL

DATE: July 20, 2000

OBSERVER: Dave Sheppard

Center Accountabilities/ Performance Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Comments
Auto Focus Scan Forms are always completed by QA Reps when monitoring agents.			Did not observe activity
Agents and their supervisors are consistently given feedback by QA Reps after monitoring sessions.			Did not observe activity
Calibrations sessions are held by QAR Supervisors for all QA Reps.			Did not observe activity
Agents use OSS to enter data for form requests.			N/A
Agents use OSS to complete survey forms.	Yes		
Agents use OSS to answer caller questions.	Yes		
Bi-lingual agents are proficient in English as well as the 2nd language.			N/A
Agents and other staff that have access to Title 13 data are all sworn in.			Did not observe activity

Center Accountabilities/ Performance Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Comments
Supervisors are observed to be actively assisting agents, conducting at-station call observations, answering questions and handling escalated calls when necessary.			Did not observe activity
EDS monitoring spreadsheet is used for QA monitoring schedules, tracking performance scores, agent classifications and agent status reporting.	Yes		
Center management is knowledgeable about TQA requirements and facilitates observer.	Yes		

OUTBOUND ~~INBOUND~~ TQA GENERAL PRODUCTION CHECKLIST OF CENTER ACCOUNTABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

CENTER: **Eclipse - Cedar Rapids, IA**

DATE: **May 20-21, 2000**

OBSERVER: **Dave Sheppard**

Center Accountabilities/ Performance Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Comments
Auto Focus Scan Forms are always completed by QA Reps when monitoring agents.	Yes		
Agents and their supervisors are consistently given feedback by QA Reps after monitoring sessions.	Yes		
Calibrations sessions are held by QAR Supervisors for all QA Reps.	Yes		
Agents use OSS to enter data for form requests.			N/A
Agents use OSS to complete survey forms.	Yes		
Agents use OSS to answer caller questions.	Yes		
Bi-lingual agents are proficient in English as well as the 2nd language.	Yes		
Agents and other staff that have access to Title 13 data are all sworn in.	Yes		

Center Accountabilities/ Performance Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Comments
Supervisors are observed to be actively assisting agents, conducting at-station call observations, answering questions and handling escalated calls when necessary.	Yes		
EDS monitoring spreadsheet is used for QA monitoring schedules, tracking performance scores, agent classifications and agent status reporting.	Yes		
Center management is knowledgeable about TQA requirements and facilitates observer.	Yes		